

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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PASS LABOR AND HEW

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PLAB, FR
SUBJECT: CGT AND CFDT CALL FOR STRIKES TO PROTEST
BARRE PLAN

REF: A. PARIS 09226; B. PARIS 10307

1. SUMMARY: THE COMMUNIST-LED CGT AND THE SOCIALIST-ORIENTED CFDT HAVE CALLED FOR STRIKES AND DEMONSTRATIONS DURING THE FOURTH WEEK OF APRIL. THIS DEVELOPMENT, THE LATEST IN THE ONGOING CAMPAIGN BY THE TWO CONFEDERATIONS TO BREAK THE BARRE PLAN, MARKS THE BEGINNING OF THE TRADITIONALLY STRIKE-PRONE SPRING SEASON. END SUMMARY.

2. FOLLOWING THEIR JOINT APRIL 7 STRATEGY SESSION (SEE REF. A) CGT AND CFDT GENERAL SECRETARIES SEGUY AND MAIRE ISSUED A DECLARATION CALLING FOR STRIKES AND DEMONSTRATIONS IN THE FOURTH WEEK OF APRIL
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THROUGHOUT THE PUBLIC AND NATIONALIZED SECTORS (WHERE WAGE NEGOTIATIONS HAVE BEEN STALEMATED), AND WITH COORDINATED ACTIONS IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR TO BE STAGED AS POSSIBLE. (THE TEACHERS' UNION FEN IS TO BE CONSULTED ON THE DATES FOR THE ACTIONS, WHICH WILL PROBABLY TAKE THE FORM OF 24-HOUR STRIKES.) THE STATED PURPOSE OF THESE DEMONSTRATIONS IS TO FORCE

THE GOVERNMENT TO ENTER INTO NEGOTIATIONS TO INTER ALIA DROP THE BARRE PLAN'S LIMITS ON WAGE INCREASES. THE DECLARATION ALSO STATES THAT THE TWO BIG THEMES OF THE TWO CONFEDERATIONS' ANTI-GOVERNMENT CAMPAIGN WILL BE UNEMPLOYMENT AND THE DEFENSE OF THE SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM, AS IT STANDS NOW. THE TWO LEADERS CALLED FOR MASSIVE MAY 1 DEMONSTRATIONS OF SOLIDARITY.

3. THIS ACCELERATION OF THE LEFT-WING UNIONS' ASSAULTS ON THE GOVERNMENT COINCIDES WITH THE ADVENT OF THE TRADITIONALLY STRIKE-PRONE SPRING SEASONS. ALREADY THERE ARE A NUMBER OF MINOR STRIKES AND THREE MAJOR LABOR CONFLICTS IN EXISTENCE. THE THREE MAJOR TROUBLE SPOTS ARE: DUNKERQUE DOCKS, WHERE A WORK DISPUTE HAS ALREADY LED TO NATIONAL DOCK STRIKES (SEE REF B); A DISPUTE AT THE GENERAL MOTORS PLANT IN PARIS, IN WHICH THE WORKERS HAVE OCCUPIED THE FACTORY; AND A PLANNED LAY-OFF OF 2,000 MEN IN THE TROUBLED STEEL INDUSTRY (BY THE SAME FIRM WHICH IS INVOLVED IN THE DUNKERQUE DISPUTE).

4. IN THESE CIRCUMSTANCES, CONTINUED CONCERN IS BEING VOICED IN A NUMBER OF CIRCLES (INCLUDING FO SECRETARY GENERAL BERGERON) THAT A CONTINUATION OF THE PRESENT SITUATION IS POTENTIALLY DANGEROUS AND THAT THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD BE MORE FLEXIBLE. TO DATE, THE GOVERNMENT HAS ONLY INDICATED THAT ANY CHANGE IN THE MUCH-CRITICIZED SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM WILL BE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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POSTPONED, IN EFFECT, UNTIL AFTER THE LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS; AND HAS SWITCHED RESPONSIBILITY FOR THAT SYSTEM FROM THE ALREADY PRESSED MINISTER OF LABOR TO THE POPULAR MINISTER OF HEALTH, MADAME VEIL.

5. NONETHELESS, MOST OBSERVERS CONTINUE TO BELIEVE THAT NEITHER THE CGT NOR THE CFDT, STILL LESS THEIR POLITICAL FRIENDS, WANT TO SEE AN OUTBREAK OF SERIOUS LABOR UNREST. IT IS BELIEVED THAT THE TWO FEDERATIONS WANT TO INTENSIFY THE PRESSURE ON THE BARRE GOVERNMENT BY A SERIES OF HIGH VISIBILITY CONTROLLED STRIKES. THE UNKNOWN FACTOR IN SUCH A SCHEME IS THE DEGREE TO WHICH THE LOOSE CFDT, AS OPPOSED TO THE COMMUNIST-DISCIPLINED CGT, CAN CONTROL ITS OWN PEOPLE.

GAMMON

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